



# SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

You've heard it before: start saving for retirement in your 20's. But if you've already missed that mark, there's still time to save. Use this checklist to figure out one thing you can do today to improve your chances of a well-financed retirement. Just go down the list and check off the tasks you've already completed; when you get to one that you haven't, that's what you can do today.

- **Enroll in your company's 401(k) or other tax-deferred, employer-sponsored savings plan.** Most employers offer one, and many also match a portion of what you contribute. The employer match is basically free money, so be sure to take full advantage of whatever your company offers.
- **Budget for retirement.** Figure out just how much money you'll need for retirement. Take into consideration the expected duration of your retirement, whether you'll be paying a mortgage or other debts, rising health care costs, and the costs associated with the retirement lifestyle you want.

Estimating your future expenses might seem difficult, especially if retirement is a long way off. MHN's Online Member Services website includes a Retirement Planning Calculator that can help. To access the calculator, log on to [www.eap4soc.mhn.com](http://www.eap4soc.mhn.com) and click on "Financial & Legal."

- **Eliminate high-interest debt.** If you're like the many Americans who have significant credit card debt, you probably can't pay it all off today. But you can make a start! Cut up a credit card or two (beginning with the card that has the highest interest rate), and develop a timeline for reducing or eliminating all credit card debt.
- **Beef up your emergency fund.** If your income is interrupted, how much money will you need to get by? It's wise to have two to six months' worth of expenses in an easily accessible, interest-bearing bank account. If you don't have an emergency fund at all, start one! If you have a small amount set aside for emergencies, consider making regular contributions to the fund until you have enough income to support you for six months.
- **Round out your investments.** You know how much you need for retirement, you're contributing to a 401(k), your debt is under control and you have cash in the bank for emergencies. It's time to take a closer look at your 401(k) allocations, to consider putting some income into an IRA, or individual retirement account, or to look into other investments.
- **Manage your savings.** If you've checked all of the items above, congratulations! Your "to-do-today" task is to set an annual appointment with your spouse or partner, a financial advisor, or just yourself, to re-evaluate your investments and your retirement plan and make any necessary adjustments.
- **Pass it on.** This one will improve your *karmic* portfolio: if you're already successfully managing your investments, schedule some time with a young person in your life and hand down a bit of your wisdom!